COLE BLEASE GRAHAM [CBG]: This is Tape 1, Side 1, an interview with Governor Robert E. McNair. This is the Governor McNair Oral History Project for the South Carolina Department of Archives and History. My name is Blease Graham, and today's date is April 16, 1982. Governor McNair, how did you get interested in politics? Was this one of your early ambitions, or was it something that you discovered as you went along the road?

ROBERT E. McNAIR [REM]: As you know, I grew up in one of the most rural areas in South Carolina; down in the lower part of Berkeley County called Hell Hole Swamp. My father was a large farmer, active in the area, and always involved in politics himself. He never held office, never sought office, but he was always sort of a political leader and one that people came to to get advice and counsel from. As a result of that, he was sort of an activist when it came to what was going on in Berkeley County. From that I sort of had an interest in politics but never thought that I would go beyond the local level.

CBG: What was it like growing up in rural South Carolina? It might be worthwhile just to take a broad look at that.

REM: Well, I think, looking back, it was an interesting thing. We still have the farm where I grew up. We still use it for weekends and vacations. Our children--pleasantly to us--have grown to like it even more as they've grown older and married and had children themselves. So it's a place for all of us to gather and to enjoy. But I tell them that the farm is the most important part of my background, really, growing up in rural South Carolina on a farm, living in a thinly populated area, riding a school bus to school every day, living in an environment like that, understanding the problems of people in an area which, when I was a young fellow, didn't have electric lights and thus didn't have indoor

plumbing and any of the conveniences that everybody expects today. Thus, as I came along, I suppose I was always conscious of where I came from and of the problems that people had who lived in rural South Carolina. The problems weren't just in the big cities and the large towns. They were also out there, and there was a need to provide good educational opportunities and recreational opportunities and to improve the living environment.

CBG: Do you idealize the rural life as the "country life," or do you see rural life as being maybe a mixture of both pleasantness and, let's say, stark reality?

REM: Well, it has both, you know. I lived, looking back, a very pleasant rural life. My father was a large farmer, you know, and we had an automobile, we had those things that were considered the luxuries then, and never really wanted for anything, though we didn't have what people in the city had thought were luxuries, electric lights and indoor plumbing and all of that. From the standpoint of the area that I lived in, I suppose that people looked at us and felt we had everything. And there was the hard side. There were the folks who lived in the tenant houses, the little small shacks, who really had no job other than a mule and a small farm. They barely pecked out a living, or they worked on the farms, and they survived and that was all. Their children didn't really have enough to enjoy any benefits. They didn't go to school. They couldn't go to school because they had to work or, if they went to school, they went for two or three years to the little, local, first three grades school and then dropped out along the way. So there was a very hard side to rural life, country life, at that time. It's so different from what we talk about today as being rural or country living. Country living today is, I

think, in most people's minds pleasant living out in the country and working in the city.

CBG: Kind of a gentleman farmer as opposed to . . .

RDM: Kind of a gentleman farmer, I think the epitome is to be able to have a place in the country . . .

CBG: Right.

REM: . . . and a place in town. It's not what it was back then when you literally lived out in the country and you did not have the conveniences and the opportunities that people had in the towns or even in the larger communities.

CBG: Some people have characterized rural life, particularly in the South, as having an undercurrent of violence that relates perhaps as much as anything to race or economic depravation. Was there much sense of that in your experience?

REM: There was really none at all. There was less than there was later and less than there is today. You rarely experienced more than the normal Saturday night cutting event where people would assemble at some place on Saturday and do something they didn't normally do and get something to drink, which was normally illegal liquor, and they'd get in a shooting or a cutting scrape. That was about it. The violence that we look on today wasn't prevalent back then. You didn't have to worry about somebody breaking into your house and stealing things. You weren't concerned about somebody coming in at night, that was unheard of. You know, people then would be afraid to do that because folks lived with shotguns in their homes, but they didn't live in fear. Petty stealing was not an uncommon thing, but it was mostly stealing something to eat. People would steal chickens or pigs or things of that nature, watermelons out of the patch,

but that was because they were doing it not to be thieves and not to be criminals . . .

CBG: Right.

REM: . . . but to get something to take home to the family to eat. So no, not in the area I was in, I think that was much more prevalent in the cities, in towns, than it was in the rural part of South Carolina particularly.

CBG: Do you think that this area around Hell Hole Swamp and Jamestown was typical of rural communities across at least the Lowcountry in South Carolina at about that time?

REM: Typical of the most rural, really, of the most rural, because that section was a big swamp area, very, very thinly populated and with none of the conveniences within fifteen miles that you would have in most places. It was typical of rural Berkeley, Williamsburg, Dorchester, Jasper, and Horry counties, through that area, yes.

CBG: Was there still fever along the . . .

REM: Oh, yes, there was a lot of fever. That was one of the most difficult things to contend with; from the malaria fever from the mosquitoes to what we referred to then--and I don't know how to spell it--as the hemorrhagic fever that came from the water. One of the first things I remember my father talking about that he did when he came to that area was to put down a very, very deep well. He tried to get a flow and couldn't, but the well that we now have at the farmhouse that we still use and drink water from is over 350 feet deep. He did that because of the problems people had from the drinking water going down with a shallow well.

In those days, and way before my time, most people had what they called summer houses. The folks that had the big plantations where the

homes were on the river would have a summer house out on the hill two or three miles from the river. They'd go out there during the summer to get away from the swamp mosquitoes or to get in an area where they could control it better and also to get away from the flat, swampy areas where the water would get stagnant. They didn't have the kinds of things, with chemicals and all, we have now to do anything about it. So they would move out and move to what they called a summer house. That's the place we now have as the farm home because the old home burned when I was just a very, very tiny person before I even remember what it looked like.

CBG: What changed all of this rural area? Was it economic activity, the building of the Santee-Cooper lakes or . . .

REM: Well, that triggered a lot of it. It all was a part of the post-Depression times. President [Franklin] Roosevelt came with all the economic recovery programs, among which was bringing electricity to the rural areas so they could develop. Santee-Cooper was built to provide power to rural South Carolina, and that provided electrical energy throughout the area that I grew up in. It brought electric lights and all the other conveniences. Highways, paved roads, which came along about the same time really to the area made it accessible and also made it possible for people who lived in those areas to get outside and get a job and thus earn a living and be able to have an automobile or have some of the other conveniences. So I think it came really from the recovery program from the last Depression.

Those were areas that the WPA and the old CCC camps meant so much to because it put people to work. People dug drainage canals and drained all those swamps and low, flat areas that were mosquito havens. The opened up land for cultivation, highly productive lands that before had been low swamp areas. The CCC camps gave young fellows an opportunity to, you

know, to see life, really. They came from the backwoods and were put in these camps and worked in the forest and helped improve the forests and things of that nature and learned how to read and write and do a lot of things. So all of those programs were very, very meaningful to people, particularly in the area where I grew up.

CBG: That National Forest Division was founded along about this time, wasn't it?

REM: Yes. That being an area of just timber and timberlands more than farms and more than people really, that was an ideal area for the National Forest to come in to and acquire thousands and thousands of acres of land. It provided opportunities for work. The coming of the pulp and paper mills was probably the best thing that ever happened to those areas during that time because they provided a market for timber, and they provided jobs for people, people, you know, that didn't have the education to run equipment and machinery but could use a handsaw. Back then, we didn't have chain saws and all the modern things that you have today. It was done by hand. A lot of it was done by mule and wagon. You know, pulp wood, crossties, were harvested then--as we refer to it today--by handsaw and mule and wagon. So it provided income to the little farmer who had land that had timber on it that he'd never had available to him before. It provided jobs for people and an opportunity for them to begin to develop economically.

CBG: What about the spread of information? Do you remember things like county agents helping farmers farm better and home demonstrations?

REM: Well, the home demonstration agent was everybody's friend because she came around about every week and visited and had a cup of coffee or back then a piece of pie or cake and brought information and let you know what was going on. Not everybody had any information. Newspapers weren't

delivered in those areas during that period of time because you couldn't get through there, in the first place, on the roads on a regular basis, and there wasn't enough business to justify somebody doing it. All you got was a Sunday paper, and there was always somebody that would manage to deliver the Sunday newspaper, and, you know, television wasn't in existence. It's hard for people to realize. Radios were battery, and you didn't have antennas, and you didn't have ways of reaching out.

CBG: Could you get a station?

REM: Very few people could get them. We could get a few.

CBG: Yes.

REM: We could get New Orleans and Cincinnati even back then at night, but you couldn't get Charleston or places like that because they didn't have the power to carry, particularly after sundown. And I can remember trying to listen to Jack Dempsey and Jim Braddock and people like that fight, and it would come and go on the radio. You could hear just a little bit of it, and when it got exciting it would fade away.

CBG: Always. (chuckles)

REM: Maybe an hour or two later you'd finally get the thing to come back and find out who had won. Sometimes it would be two or three days later before you would know. Only a few people had radios that could reach out at all, and we'd all get together at somebody's house and listen. County agents were sources of information and help and traveled. I suppose the preacher was the biggest source of information because there weren't resident ministers then. They were all sort of touring preachers who lived in town and preached at about three or four churches every Sunday, and thus when they came around, you'd get all the information on what was happening in different areas. We were a little more fortunate, as I said, because we did have an automobile, we did have a big farm, and we did have

the big country store. My father had to go to Charleston periodically, once a month, to get some stuff for the farm or the store. Normally that was delivered, and you'd get information from those kind of people, but nobody knew a whole lot about what was going on anywhere other than right in the little community, and you didn't know a whole lot about that because you only got together on Wednesday night for prayer meeting and on Sunday for church.

CBG: And the rest of the time was basically work or for a little person school . . .

REM: That's right.

CBG: . . . and work in the afternoon.

REM: And that was for relatively few people.

CBG: Yes.

REM: At that time there was a two-teacher school that was for whites only and for those who didn't have to work, so there wasn't a whole lot of information spread through the school system really. There was a separate school for blacks.

CBG: What about your family's background? Had they lived in this area for a long period of time, or had they moved over the . . .

REM: My mother was a native of Berkeley County, a community called Russellville, which is now where Georgia Pacific has their major installations in South Carolina. It was the old Camp Manufacturing Company and later Williams Furniture Company and now Georgia Pacific. She grew up in that area, and her father and her family all lived there forever. Her father was a part-time Christian preacher, a member of the Christian church, and, sort of like most people, just a self-annointed preacher. He preached around the churches and had a little small farm. My father grew up in North Carolina, up in the Laurinburg-Lumberton area

where all the "Macs" settled, and he came to South Carolina in the early 1900s, '15, '16, or '17, with a big lumber company, Shaw-McLeod, I believe, from Lumberton who had purchased the place that we now own for farming and timbering. He had been up there with a large family on a large farm and had worked as a deputy sheriff for Sheriff McLeod, so they got him to come down to manage the operations in South Carolina. He ended up staying on down and marrying my mother and ultimately acquiring the place and owning it.

CBG: Is your family one to trace roots very far?

REM: I am not and have spent no time at all. I have some members of the family who do. You know that my mother was a Crawford, and Crawfords have roots throughout that area of South Carolina on back, you know, many, many years. We've never really traced the Crawford family to develop any kind of information on it. People send me things when they find out who she was. On my father's side, some of the relatives, cousins, have done a good bit of work. There've been a lot of McNair genealogy books published, and people send me those. So I can trace it back. I can trace back to where we've come from the Duncan McNair clan or where a McNair and a Patterson married on the Mayflower coming over.

CBG: Yes.

REM: You know, you get all those kinds of things that people tell you about.

CBG: Yes.

REM: I was named for a Reverend Evander McNair, who was well known in Presbyterian Church history because he was the buggy-riding preacher that helped organize the Presbyterian Church up in North Carolina. And I believe there's a scholarship in his name at the University of North

Carolina now that identifies his involvement. So we have more on the McNair family than we do on my mother's side.

CBG: Did both of your parents maintain an active interest in church activities?

REM: They were very, yes, very active in the church and community and community activities then centered around the church. The church was it. That was your social life. Everything centered around the church. About everything that was done was church-oriented or church-sponsored, and both of them were very, very active. As I said, we grew up in the church, and when the church door was open, we were there. It was the thing to do, and so I grew up that way.

CBG: Yes.

REM: We felt like they couldn't have a church service if we weren't there. But I think that again is a part of the heritage of growing up in the country. You find people with a rural background, as people would say, more religious than folks who grew up in the city where they had other opportunities and could go to the picture show on Saturday night. We'd study for Sunday school because we didn't have a picture show to go to.

CBG: Do you sense that there are traits or general characteristics of either mother or father that are important to you today as a way to approach doing business? For example, a father who's managing a large operation has to have perhaps a little of it rub off on a son who's managing a state or a large business of his own.

REM: Well, to some extent yes, and I give them full credit because I was an only child. I had a lot of relatives on my mother's side and a lot of friends, so I was never all alone. I didn't grow up as an only child. I always had some of my mother's family who had difficulties of some kind,

and we always had one or two of them staying with us, going to school or staying with us during the summer. Growing up in the country, you always had somebody in spending the night because not many people drove up in the front yard and spent a couple of hours. They lived too far away. So it was, "Come spend the night with us," not, you know, "Come visit for a few hours."

CBG: Yes.

REM: But, yes, my mother was very active. She was the person in the area, if somebody was sick, be they black or white, if somebody needed to go to the doctor, you know, particularly among the blacks, she was the one who would take them to the doctor and take care of them and be sure they had things. She was active in the church. If there was any kind of fund drive, she was involved with it. My father ran the farm, and my mother really was responsible for running the store. Being involved with a lot of livestock operations, being in the crosstie business--we had timber lands, and we'd produce cross ties for the railroad--and things like that caused him to become a manager. In that time, it wasn't big dollars, but it was to him, and it was to us, and it was to that area. So, yes, coming along as an only child, I was one who, with what was normally going on, was particularly very, very close to his father. I can recall from being just a little boy, I'd get on the horse and ride with him when he'd go out to round up the cattle. He'd take me along and sit me on the front of his saddle, and as soon as I got big enough, I'd go with him. When he'd go to Charleston to buy things, I'd go with him. When he went to town to get equipment for the farm, I'd go with him. So you sort of grew up with it and you grew up with it inbred into you. Don't buy anything you can't pay for, and don't deal in credit.

CBG: Yes.

REM: He had a thing about credit. Some things you had to do on credit, but it wasn't to ever get over-extended and to always pay cash if you could and always get a discount.

CBG: Yes.

REM: He operated on that theory, and he sold things that way. When he sold things, you know, he wanted his money for them.

CBG: Yes.

REM: So, yes, you grew up with a certain amount of it that perhaps others wouldn't get, having that particular and peculiar opportunity.

CBG: What about venturing out to school? What was it like going into the first grade? There was no kindergarten at that point.

REM: No. We could then go at five years old. That was before the six-year-old thing came along. There was no kindergarten, and there was a three-teacher, six-or seven-grade school at Jamestown, which was two miles away. So I had to go there and had to be taken down there every morning in the buggy and picked up every afternoon in the buggy until I got large enough to ride my horse. Then I'd always ride down with somebody, and they'd bring the horse back and bring him back in the afternoon. Sometimes they'd take you in the automobile when we got to that stage, but that was a good experience. I suppose we're coming back to that now because with a three-teacher, seven-grade school, you just didn't sit in there with a group of five-year olds. You sat in there with a group of kids older, studying other things, and it was sort of a little bit of what we see now with the group teaching. Looking back on it and looking on towards the college and university days, I found that I got a surprisingly good basic education. Reading, writing, and arithmetic were instilled in us, how to read, write, and spell, better than kids that grew up in the city were getting. Now, we didn't get the other things. We didn't have the arts

and the extras, and we didn't know a whole lot about what was going on in the outside world, but we were getting a pretty solid, sound, basic education that later proved to be better than I even thought it was at that time.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

CBG: This is Tape 1, Side 2, an interview with Governor Robert E. McNair. This is the Governor McNair Oral History Project for the South Carolina Department of Archives and History. Governor McNair, we were talking about your early experiences in elementary education. Do you recall any of your teachers and any influence they may have had on you?

REM: I sure do. I remember those that I had at that school and that level probably better than most of them later. There are always teachers that stand out along the way, but I remember Miss Lilly Bailey and Miss Stella Grady, who were the two teachers that taught me in the beginning of elementary school, and the influences from them because they were very stern disciplinarians.

CBG: Yes.

RMM: They stand out that way, and they stand out as people. We say today that you can teach, but you can't make them learn.

CBG: Yes.

REM: But those kind made us learn, I think. I have said later--I often get myself in trouble in this particular area because I said Miss Lilly and Miss Stella, not only taught us, but they made us learn, too. They "learned" us, and they were very stern, but not college-educated themselves. There were very few so-called college-educated teachers back at that time.

CBG: Yes.

REM: They themselves happened to be two very good people to discipline you and also to teach you, and I can remember going back years later, when they would have some testimonial dinner or some affair honoring them and expressing to them my belated appreciation. I had come to appreciate them a lot more than I did back in those early days. They were also our Sunday School teachers.

CBG: Oh.

REM: You know, you usually went to the same churches, and you had them then, so they had a great influence on you. I think back then, too, we had the old rule that if you got a spanking at school, you got one at home.

CBG: Maybe with a little more intensity . . . (chuckles)

REM: The one at home, that's right, was a little rougher than the one at school.

CBG: Yes.

REM: And they knew, too, that they had the authority and the support of the parents to discipline. We had some bad kids back then, mischievous. They would do anything, but they knew that the teacher had the authority, and I think that particularly they were a good influence on those young kids who didn't come from a good environment. That was the only discipline they got. That was the only time they were taught, you know, how you deal with somebody else, how you shared, how you treated, that you can't take it by physical force, you know, that's not the way you get through life. That was the only good influences that they had on them. So those teachers were more than just teachers. They were molders of people and psychologists and counselors and mamas and daddys and doctors and friends to people coming along then.

CBG: Did the school have a principal?

REM: Well, yes, then one of the teachers was the principal. She was called principal, but she taught just like everyone else. Then she was just the head teacher.

CBG: Yes.

REM: I went to this school only through the first three grades because there was a rural consolidated school called Macedonia that had the high school in it. My father became active in that with me coming along and chairman of the board, so I transferred on up to Macedonia in the fourth grade. Once you got through the first three grades at Jamestown they were rather limited, and Macedonia then had one teacher per grade.

CBG: Oh, yes.

REM: And it was a very progressive rural school. They had a very progressive superintendent. It had gained a good reputation. Part of the reason for it was the Francis Marion National Forest, really, when it came in and bought up all the lands. Normally, the government--and we argue today about taking property off the tax books. The government paid so much in lieu of taxes to the school district. My father was instrumental in working on that and getting it, and thus Macedonia got the bulk of that because it covered the Francis Marion National Forest. Surprisingly, that was a big boost because back in that day property was valued at so little, and the houses and all were so small that they didn't produce much income. So the district, the school, got more money from the government than it would have gotten from just that raw timber land sitting out there. So, we had some of the benefits in that rural country school that you wouldn't normally have had. It was twelve miles from home, so I had to ride the bus twelve miles every morning and twelve miles back in the afternoon, so it was almost from daylight to dark, really, in going to school.

CBG: What were some of your favorite subjects as you moved on into high school?

REM: Well, I suppose then you didn't have too many favorites because there again we were taught the basics. Though we began to get the benefits from some of the fringes, there was still a concentration on math and English and the basic science. This continued on--and this was something that paid dividends later on, how to read and how to spell. As we got into high school, we had a progressive superintendent who had a quality faculty. We had strong math, English, sciences, basic sciences, and we had the benefits of the oratorical involvement, declamation, as we called it then, debate, and we were very active in it. This was something that I found of tremendous benefit later on, to have participated in it and to have followed it through to the state level in the contest. We also participated in the various, then they had the statewide test, you know, in math, English, and all those sort of things, and we participated. Not many rural schools did, but this was something that all the students did, and we were always very pleased with how well what we called our top students would do in competing at the state level. So I suppose, as I said, I had an unusual opportunity, growing up in a family as an only child but on a large farm where I had benefits others didn't have and going to a rural school where I feel we got a better education than a lot of others did in similar circumstances in lower South Carolina.

CBG: What did you do for extra-curriculars during this interval? Being on the declamation team would be one.

REM: Well, we had athletics, and everybody participated. You know, if it was football season, we all played football; basketball, we did that; baseball, and there was some track, not very much, but we did that too. You know, you'd interrupt a baseball game to run a broad jump or a high

jump or run a hundred-yard dash and come back and take your turn back in the baseball game. That was good, and we had a good, progressive program. We had, for a rural school, as much outside activity--the glee club that participated in Charleston and places like that, limited social activities because there weren't many approved social activities back then. At that time it was too difficult to get back and forth to the school. When school was out, you went home on the buses, and there weren't an awful lot of nighttime activities. Everything centered around school time and school hours.

CBG: Did most of your high school classmates stay in the local area after graduation, or did they move on?

REM: We had a surprising number that went off to school, and a surprising number that have done, what you would call by comparison, well, school teaching, preaching. In my class, two of us are lawyers. One or two graduated from Clemson in engineering, and we had about fifteen to twenty in our graduating class. Those people there began to get conscious of the need for education, and a lot of the children would work and go to school. But basically they stayed there, yes. We, again, had an unusual group that came along during that period of time by pure accident, I think. But basically they stayed there, lived in the same community. Most of them had gotten good jobs outside, after finishing high school, working in Charleston at the navy yard, which then opened up to them, and places like that, so they would commute back and forth. I suppose the complexion of the area has changed a good bit. You see nice new homes, painted, with electricity and all the modern conveniences. Where in that time it was very rare and unusual to see a painted house. One of the reasons was there were no loans. You couldn't borrow money to build a house in the country.

CBG: Yes.

REM: There wasn't anybody that would loan money outside of an incorporated municipality except the federal land bank, and they would only loan to large landowners. So, the person with the small piece of land and just a little one-man or one-mule operation couldn't borrow money to build a home. He built it himself, room by room, as he could afford to go buy the lumber and the materials to build it with.

CBG: What about your own experience in deciding whether to stay or to leave? Was that much of a struggle?

REM: It really never was much of a choice. (chuckles) My family all felt I should further my education and go on to school. There was at one point some question in my own mind and all as to whether I ought to stay on the farm. My father was a lot older. He had traveled around before he settled there. In fact, he was about twenty-five years older than my mother. When I was born, he was in his fifties. So, you know, he was on up in years, and it was a question about who was going to stay and run the farm. By then he was really beginning to slow it down as far as his farming operations, and everybody was pushing me more toward going on to school. I don't think there was ever any doubt about it.

CBG: Yes.

REM: The only question was what I was going to do. There was never a doubt then about going to professional school. At one point in my earlier life it was whether I'd go into the ministry. My mother pushed very hard in that direction, to go to college, and go to the seminary. For some reason, without ever talking about it or anybody ever dealing with it very much, I think I was headed towards being a lawyer. I don't know where that came from because there were no lawyers in the family. But I had that in mind and opted initially to go to Clemson because that's where

everybody went. I don't think in the rural part of the state we knew there was any place else other than Clemson although my superintendent began to influence me toward the university [of South Carolina] because he was a university graduate. I went on to Clemson and discovered that Clemson was a engineering school basically, the sciences and engineering and agriculture. I didn't plan to do any of that. I had made a mistake academically, and the university is where I should have been if I wanted to study law. So that's where I transferred from Clemson after one semester.

CBG: What was your experience like at Carolina? Did you find the subjects of the type that you had wanted?

REM: Yes, back then, having been at Clemson, I think, was a good experience because there you were so limited in what you could get in the arts and science area or the so-called pre-law area. I think they had one English professor and one history professor, and the rest of the time I had to fill in with botany and things like that to just to get the number of required hours, whereas at the university I had real opportunities. It didn't take me long to learn that I really didn't need math and go on into the calculus and all. Because of the ability to double major, I opted for the two things that I thought were the best for me, and that was English and political science. Everybody then going into law studied political science, but rather than spread it around I opted to take the double major with a major in English as well as a major in political science and took basically those throughout the four-year career since we did have that opportunity.

CBG: Do you recall some of the teachers who were active on the campus while you were a student at the university?

REM: Oh, I sure do. Yes, I can remember Maude Hawkins who taught English and how difficult it was to stay in her classes because she was very strict on the three cuts. If you took the three, you were out, and she always taught early morning classes and . . .

CBG: Yes.

REM: . . . some of us would have to take it about three times to get through because we'd miss that early morning class too often. But she was very strong and very good, very demanding. She reminded me a lot of my high school teachers because she was a strict disciplinarian. And then Dr. [Havilah] Babcock that all of us know. I took everything that Dr. Babcock taught at the university. I think we had a closeness because of his love for bird hunting and growing up in the country and loving to quail hunt and bird hunt. He was so interesting, so we ended up taking everything from him. It was interesting then, too, because Dr. Arial who taught at Columbia College came over and taught at the university. He taught Tennyson and Browning. They didn't have anybody apparently at the university. That was very good. You know, what's a young fellow from Hell Hole Swamp, South Carolina, taking Tennyson and Browning? I really felt that I got a good, broad educational background at the university. The professors were good then. They were all very interested. The History Department was very strong, Dr. Foran who I think had come from Harvard. That was something novel to us but he was extremely good and strong. [Robert] Meriwether, you know, [Robert] Wienefeld. All of those are people whose names are part of the history of South Carolina and of the university and were very good. Political Science was a developing department. They had, they were good. I look at some books at the farm every now and then, say, from a course in comparative governments. That was where we studied the Russian Communist government, the Italian

government, the British government, things like that, in getting a comparison. The reason that was so interesting was because of the Huey Long days in Louisiana, the Share Our Wealth social reform, the type of thing that he was espousing around the country. That made studying communism against, Americanism, or democracy, looking at what was happening, you know, what the Swiss government was like and things of that nature, very interesting.

CBG: It really opened some new views.

REM: Opened some new views and new ideas and, I think sort of prepared us all a little better for the law and for public service, not just the law practice.

CBG: Was the university very big at that time?

REM: No, it was relatively small, by comparison. That's when Rion McKissick was president. He had brought some innovation to the university, and it had begun to grow again. I think there may have been 1700 or 1800 students, if that many. We knew everybody. You walked across the campus, and you spoke to everybody. Dr. and Mrs. McKissick knew everybody by name by the time they'd been there for a few months.

CBG: He was a famous bicycle rider, too.

REM: Right. He'd ride around on the bicycle, but a very, very friendly, warm atmosphere.

CBG: Did you do a lot of things like play on athletic teams or get involved . . .

REM: Well, I had participated in everything in high school and unfortunately torn up a knee, one of those cartilages that was totally dislocated.

CBG: Yes.

REM: At that time surgery wasn't what you did unless you had no alternative because more often than not you ended up with a stiff leg, so I had passed that up. I had almost gone to Wofford on football and basketball scholarship and would probably have gone, had it not been for that, but my family was more interested in me getting an education. They didn't take too well to somebody going off the school to participate in athletics. Going to Clemson, I played freshman basketball and then came to the university and went out for and after staying out the year made the varsity team and played one year there, but the leg got worse, kept going out of joint. I played intramural football and tore it up terribly. So I had a choice between surgery or giving up athletics which I did.

CBG: Did the war [World War II] come along at about the middle of your college career?

REM: The war came along right in the middle. I went off to school in 1940, and the war came in 1941, and we were all sophomores, I think. Most of us then got into the V-7 and V-12, different programs like that, in order to complete our education. We were all told that if you got in the V-12 program, you could graduate and then go in. That's when school started year around, so you completed in three years what normally took four years because you went continuously. Thus in our second year but our junior year, we were all called into active duty and into World War II.

CBG: Where were your duty stations in World War II?

REM: Well, those of us that were in the Navy V-12 program were sent off to midshipman's school. I was sent to Northwestern University and got a commission as an ensign and then from there we were sent out to various assignments. At that time was when the decision was made for the big push in the Pacific. So all of my class with a few exceptions were sent to 7th Amphibious Forces in the Pacific for the big move out there, the invasions

of New Guinea and the Philippines and on through. So, I spent all of my time in the Pacific theatre.

CBG: Did you see much active duty there?

REM: We saw a good bit. I was assigned to LC/T duty. That's Landing Craft/Tanks. Those were the things that could carry about half a dozen of those Sherman tanks or a lot of people and equipment and land them on shore. So we saw a good bit of activity in the upper areas of New Guinea where they were finishing up there and then all of the activity in the Philippines. We were in the Leyte invasion and then fully involved in the Lingayen Gulf Invasion. And of course, that was just the two big ones, but there were numerous ones on the other islands. So all of our time was spent there during that time.

CBG: Did you command your own craft?

REM: I did. They only had two officers on them with about twelve or fifteen enlisted men, and I was assigned as an exec and was lucky and unlucky, I suppose. After one of our early operations--and we'd never had any training on them because we were sent clean out there to learn the hard way, not in school, how to operate one of those things. After an early operation, one of them ran up on coral and was heavily damaged, and they felt the officer had not carried out his duties extremely well. So he was relieved, and for some reason, as one of the young executive officers on them, I happened to be the one that was transferred over to take command of his. So, it was an unfortunate experience, but turned out to be fortunate because that meant I became a commanding officer on one of them early. That had a lot of fringe benefits to it, and it also had some fringe benefits when time for coming home came along because I could be relieved along with those who were in command where the ones who were the

number two guys had to stay on until somebody else could take over for them.

END OF SIDE TWO